

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-11 ISO-00 MMS-03 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9576

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 1957

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, IN, US, UK

SUBJECT: REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER'S DIEGO GARCIA REMARKS

REFS: NEW DELHI 1932,1903,1901

1. ALL NEWSPAPERS FEBRUARY 8 CARRIED MRS. GANDHI'S CRITICISM OF "SOME POWERS IN SETTING UP A NUCLEAR BASE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN", BUT NONE RPT NONE INCLUDED ANY REFERENCE TO "AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS" OR A "THREAT TO INDIA'S SECURITY" AS CARRIED ON THE UNI NEWS TICKER (REFTEL B). ALL-INDIA RADIO ENGLISH NEWS THE SAME DAY FOLLOWED THE SAME PATTERN, BUT INCLUDED THE LINE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SAID DIEGO GARCIA POSED A THREAT TO INDIA'S SECURITY. IT ADDED THE FOLLOWING TWO SENTENCES: "REFERRING TO INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE US, PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT INDIA HAS NO ENMITY WITH THAT COUNTRY. BOTH THE COUNTRIES WANT FRIENDSHIP BUT SOMETIMES CERTAIN PAINFUL DEVELOPMENTS TAKE PLACE WHICH ARE NOT CONDUCIVE TO THE BETTERMENT OF RELATIONS".

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2. CQ EDITORIAL COMMENT, COMMUNIST-LINE PATRIOT TERMED DIEGO GARCIA "AN AMERICAN NUCLEAR ATTACK BASE" AND SAID IT WAS BEING BUILT BECAUSE GROWING ACCORD BETWEEN INDIAN AND THE USSR NEEDED TO BE THREATENED FROM AS MANY POINTS AS POSSIBLE. SURPRISINGLY, PATRIOT CALLED FOR INDIA TO ACQUIRE A NUCLEAR DEFENSE CAPABILITY. THE NATIONAL HERALD SAID IT HAD BEEN CLEAR SINCE THE BEGINNING THAT THE DIEGO GARCIA FACILITY WOULD BE BUILT INTO A BASE THAT COULD "POSE A DIRECT MILITARY THREAT TO FREE NATIONS IN AFRICA, WEST ASIA, AND SOUTH ASIA". THE PAPER COMMENTED: "IF THE AMERICAN INTENTION IS TO ESTABLISH HEGEMONY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION, IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THIS POSITION TO REMAIN UNCHALLENGED (BY OTHER BIG POWERS)." IN A MODERATE EDITORIAL, THE TIMES OF INDIA REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF NAVAL RIVALRY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND CONCLUDED THAT BIG POWERS WILL CONTINUE TO SEND SHIPS TO THE AREA. IT SUPPORTED GOI OPPOSITION TO THE EXPANDED FACILITY, BUT SAID INDIA CANNOT BE SURPRISED AT THE US-UK MOVE.

3. NEWS STORIES ALSO CARRIED INACCURATE REPORTS FROM AN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN THAT US AND UK OFFICIALS HAD BEEN CALLED IN TO RECEIVE GOI PROTESTS. THIS APPEARS TO BE EFFORT TO CLOSE THE BOOK ON THE CURRENT OFFICIAL REACTION BY INTERPRETING US AND UK-INITIATED CALLS OF FEBRUARY 4 AND 5 AS CONSTITUTING RECEIPT OF GOI "PROTEST".

4. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT GOI TOOK ACTION TO "KILL" OBJECTIONAL ELEMENTS IN MRS. GANDHI'S REPORTED UP ADDRESS (REF B) BUT WE ASSUME IT MAY BE MORE THAN COINCIDENCE THAT THESE SEGMENTS APPEAR NOWHERE IN PRINT. NEWS ABOUT DIEGO GARCIA AND INDIA'S REACTION TO IT WAS OUT OF THE HEADLINES, AND, IN SOME CASES, OFF THE FRONT PAGES ON FEBRUARY 8. NEWS FROM WASHINGTON AND ELSEWHERE AS WELL AS CONVENING OF INDIAN PARLIAMENT ON FEBRUARY 18 WILL REVIVE INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT HERE, HOWEVER.
SCHNEIDER

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